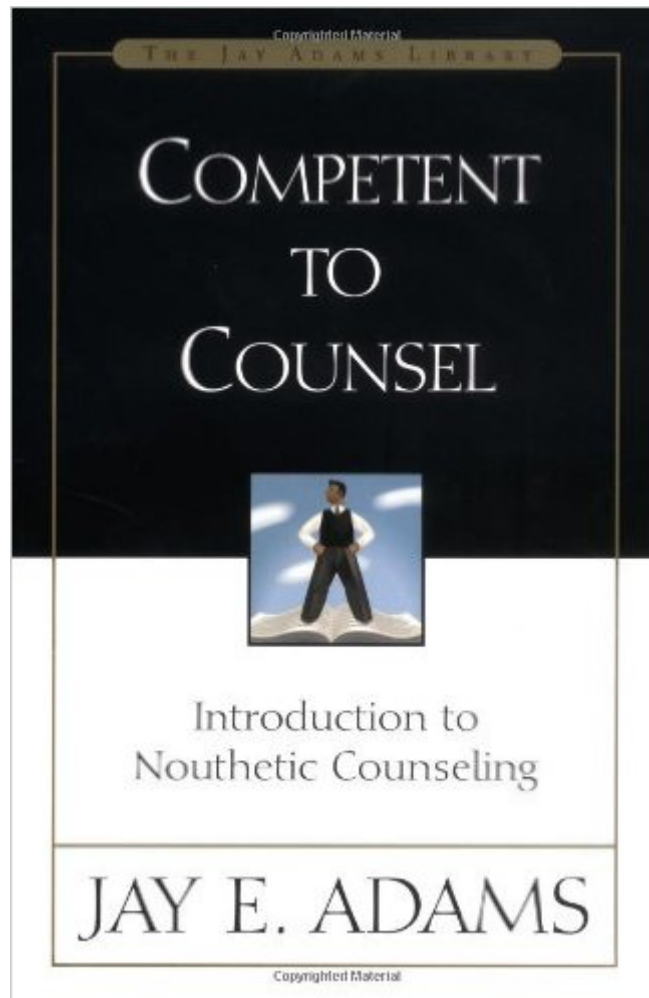


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# Competent To Counsel



## Synopsis

A Classic in the Field of Christian Counseling *Competent to Counsel* has helped thousands of pastors, students, laypersons, and Christian counselors develop both a general approach to Christian counseling and a specific response to particular problems. Using biblically directed discussion, nouthetic counseling works by means of the Holy Spirit to bring about change in the personality and behavior of the counselee. As Dr. Jay Adams points out in his introduction, "I have been engrossed in the project of developing biblical counseling and have uncovered what I consider to be a number of important scriptural principles. . . . There have been dramatic results. . . . Not only have people's immediate problems been resolved, but there have also been solutions to all sorts of long-term problems as well." Since its first publication in 1970, this book has gone through over thirty printings. It establishes the basis for and an introduction to a counseling approach that is being used in pastors' studies, in counseling centers, and across dining room tables throughout the country and around the world

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Forty years ago a concerned pastor, who had been intimidated by psychological counseling theories and therapies, boldly proclaimed that pastors, elders, and lay leaders were competent and better equipped to minister to their own people struggling with problems than professionals in the secular therapeutic realm. Dr. Jay Adams laid out his claim in the book *Competent to Counsel*. Dr. Adams is

a counselor, writer, pastor, and the founder of the Institute for Nouthetic Studies. *Competent to Counsel*, written in 1970, is his most well-known book, though by no means his only work on the subject of Nouthetic counseling. His own failure at counseling one of his church attendees led him to seek to be a better and more effective counselor to those who seek him out as pastor. It didn't take long for him to realize that modern psychoanalysis and counseling techniques as taught in the secular world did not offer much relief or assistance to the hurting either. Life altering experiences such as teaching practical theology and Westminster Theological Seminary, working with Christian psychologist O. Hobart Mower at two state mental institutions in Illinois, and his own personal in-depth study of Scripture all led Adams to the realization that all concepts, terms and methods used in counseling need to be re-examined biblically (xviii), which is exactly what he set out to do in his first work, *Competent to Counsel*. In *Competent to Counsel* Adams explains that practices of modern psychoanalysis are self-defeating because they are based on the assumption that man can heal himself, right his own wrongs, and change his own behaviors. However, the Bible teaches the believer that man is depraved and sinful from birth and has no means within himself to change this fact.

This book by Dr. Adams is remarkable because it opened the debate among Christians about the practice of counseling. Adams goes after some easy targets, namely Freud and Rogers. He invites the Christian to examine the sufficiency of Scripture for providing counsel in times when wisdom is needed. He identifies important passages in Scripture that certainly encourage us to counsel one another in love and truth. However, there are several notable shortcomings. First, Adams adopts a simplistic approach to mental illness - one that has potential to do considerable harm if misapplied. While he rightly differentiates between faux non-organic "illnesses" and bona fide chemical brain disorders, he neglects a significant in-between region that consists of deeply troubled individuals whose cognitive make-ups or personality organizations make responding positively to simplistic and direct confrontation unlikely. The nuances of relationship-building that are an important component of therapy and discipleship appear to be lacking. Second, to say this is a reformed perspective on counseling appears to misapply the meaning of "reformed." Reformed theology acknowledges the Lordship of Christ in all things, including psychology and psychotherapy. To exclude some theories, practices, and methods simply because they are extra-biblical (not anti-biblical, just not in the Bible) denies the Christian's ability, even the command via the Cultural Mandate, to examine the truth in God's world and apply it in faith and wisdom. It is best embodied by Kuyper's insistence that there is not a square-inch of creation over which Christ does not say "mine!" Unfortunately, Dr.

What if you suddenly found yourself counseling a friend on a problem they are facing? What would be the basis or foundation for your advice? Would you quickly do a "google search" to find the latest self-help book on the subject? Would you go to the library and consult a Psychology journal for the latest theories on behavior modification? If you are a Christian, your answer should be "No! The word of God!" The Bible is the Christian's basis for wisdom in living. The Bible addresses the most fundamental issues of mankind. The Bible has the answers for life's most perplexing problems. Therefore, Christian counseling must be BIBLICAL counseling. In this book, Jay Adams provides a general introduction to this topic of Biblical counseling. I found this book to be a helpful introduction to the subject with many "golden nuggets" of practical advice. Sadly, many pastors and other leaders have ceded ground to Psychology and Psychiatry. Under the guise of "mental illness," these theories attempt to shift responsibility from the counselee and blame outside influences (pg 1-19) (By this assessment, I am NOT including legitimate "organic" problems, such as brain or chemical damage). Freud's principles are based on the belief that religion is invented to fulfill man's needs. Furthermore, his views "encouraged irresponsible people to persist in and expand their irresponsibility...and made it respectable." (pg 17). Christians, on the other hand, understand that the basic problem in man is SIN (Romans 3). Only the Bible provides the solution to the problem of sin - the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible's message is that all people are utterly sinful and deserve judgment and hell.

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